Visit of Foreign Secretary to USA

*279. SHRI C. M. IBRAHIM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Foreign Secretary visited USA in May this year, for talks on various bilateral and multilateral issues; and

(b) if so, the main issues discussed and the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH) (a) Yes, Sir. The Foreign Secretary visited the United States from 17-19 May for Foreign Office Consultations and the Asian Security Dialogue with the U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. These two bilateral consultations arc part of the architecture of the institutional dialogue between India and the United States established in March, 2000.

(b) The Foreign Office Consultations is a forum to review bilateral relations and discuss future cooperation across the entire spectrum of bilateral activities. In addition, the two sides exchange views on regional and international developments as well as multilateral issues of mutual interest. The Asian Security Dialogue provides an opportunity to the two countries to share perceptions on issues relating to security and stability in Asia and identify areas of common interest therein.

During the consultations in May, the two sides reiterated their commitment to build more meaningful and productive relations and agreed to continue and further develop the Dialogue Architecture as a means to pursue that goal. The talks contributed to strengthening understanding with the new U.S. Administration on regional and international issues, including those relating to security matters in the Asian and wider international contexts. In addition, the two sides agreed to intensify dialogue and cooperation on multilateral issues of common interest such as international terrorism and UN peacekeeping. Following Foreign Secretary's visit, meetings of the Joint Working Groups on Counter-terrorism and UN Peacekeeping Operations were held in the last week of June, 2001.